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SUBJECT: IDPS RETURNING TO BUNER BUT INFRASTRUCTURE STILL
LACKING; PREPARATION FOR DISPLACEMENTS FROM S. WAZIRISTAN

REF: ISLAMABAD 1340

Classified By: Anne W. Patterson, for reasons 1.4 (b)(d)

¶1. (U) Summary: Embassy representatives who traveled to Buner district in Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP) on June 16 reported that residents are returning, with about half the shops and markets open. The representatives assessed infrastructure and reported that, while roadways were in good shape, electrical and telephone grids were severely damaged. The lack of electricity has led to problems with access to fuel and clean water. While the majority of private homes observed were undamaged, approximately 50 percent of government buildings were damaged or destroyed. The picture in Mingora, Swat is less clear. Preparation for international provision of humanitarian assistance to persons displaced from South Waziristan has been hindered by access problems although international organizations stand ready to meet humanitarian needs and are funded to do so. End Summary

REPORT FROM BUNER

¶2. (SBU) On June 16, Embassy Narcotics Affairs Section (NAS) locally employed engineers traveled to Buner district to make an assessment of infrastructure conditions. Their report, presented June 18, noted that access to Buner was only available via the Mardan-Mingora road, as all other routes were deemed off-limits by the Pakistan military due to the remaining dangers of land mines and unexploded ordinance. Militant activity appeared to be substantially limited to rural areas away from main roads. In Buner, the roads were in good condition though electrical and telephone grids were severely damaged. Because of the damage, electricity is not widely available, and that lack of power is causing problems for access to fuel and clean water.

¶3. (SBU) According to Buner district officials, approximately 50 percent of the government buildings, including police stations, schools and hospitals, were damaged or destroyed. The District Police Officer told NAS's engineers that there are 5 police stations, 10 police posts and 5 police patrolling posts in Buner. While the engineers were unable to visit all of these facilities, the five that they did observe had sustained severe damage. Large numbers of police and Army personnel were observed patrolling streets and markets as well as manning border checkpoints.

IDP RETURNS

14. (SBU) The engineers reported that they saw many buses and large trucks filled with residents, and in some cases their livestock, returning to various parts of Buner. Reports from local officials also indicate that the majority of Buner residents were able to harvest crops this season despite fighting. (Note: This supports other reports Post has received about residents returning temporarily to conflict areas to harvest crops. Even at the height of security operations, one or two family members, often the male head of household, remained close to the family residence while the rest of the family relocated to safer areas. End note.) The engineers reported local markets were open and operating at approximately half capacity - reflecting the presence of some residents while other family members remain away.

15. (U) The delay in the return to Buner of remaining IDPs was attributed by the engineers to two separate issues: the lack of basic services, such as electricity and sanitation throughout Buner, and families' waiting to receive the promised 25,000-rupee (312 USD) cash payout from the federal government.

PICTURE IN SWAT

16. (U) The GOP has begun payouts to displaced families and reported on June 16 that 15,887 families, largely from Jalozai camp, had received debit cards with a 25,000 rupees

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balance (Reftel). Post's contacts report that most of the 25,000-rupee payments have gone thus far to displaced families from the "settled areas", i.e., Swat. (Note: We are looking into allegations of discrimination. End note.) According to the NWFP's Emergency Response Unit, no IDPs have departed official camps en route to Swat. On June 19, EmbOff spoke with Swati IDPs in Mansehra who had recently traveled back to Swat. The IDPs reported that, contrary to GOP reports, Mingora still had no services. While encountering no fighting firsthand, the IDPs reported they continually heard shelling and gunfire in the surrounding mountains. A representative from the International Committee of the Red Cross confirmed to Refcoord that it was pulling its team (including 3-4 expatriates) from Swat over the weekend of June 20-21 because of security concerns.

17. (U) The GOP, however, continues to paint a rosier picture of the situation in Swat. On June 18, Defense Minister Chaudhry Ahmed Mukhtar said that the operation in Swat valley was virtually over; the government had purged the district of militants and achieved its military objectives. The Pakistani press also reported that Mukhtar had invited IDPs from Swat to begin returning home June 20, although he said that it would take a month for all IDPs to complete their return. (NOTE: Pakistan government IDP point-man LTG Nadeem Ahmed told international donors that the Pakistani government would begin its bureaucratic process for facilitating returns on June 20.) Other Post contacts have reported that the GOP hopes to have most of the displaced population returned home before Ramadan begins, approximately August 21 this year.

PREPARATIONS FOR AID TO IDPS FROM SOUTH WIZIRISTAN

18. (SBU) Preparation for international provision of humanitarian assistance to those coming out of South Waziristan has been hindered by access problems. The GOP has offered Bhakkar on the east bank of the Indus as the venue for an international humanitarian hub but has not provided international access to Dera Ismail Khan or permitted camp preparations where the internally displaced could reasonably be expected to come.

¶9. (C) The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has not been permitted to fly into DI Khan despite agreement in principle from civilian and military authorities. ICRC's Acting Head of Delegation has indicated that while ICRC understands the military's reasonable concerns for ICRC staff safety, he believes that the agency could get "guarantees" from militants as it has received in the North. A senior member of ICRC's surge staff will try to convince the 11th Corps that ICRC cannot provide a meaningful humanitarian assistance response if it is not permitted to work in the area and that ICRC cannot accomplish its task totally without expatriate staff. ICRC still remains the international humanitarian assistance provider likely first to gain access to Waziristan displaced, and when it does so, FY09 Supplemental funding provided to its appeal by the Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM) will ensure that ICRC is prepared to respond. PRM will use Migration and Refugee Assistance funding (MRA) to respond to approximately 30 percent of ICRC revised appeal for Pakistan.

¶10. (C) The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and others are getting very conflicting signals from the GOP as to whether the GOP plans to establish camps or whether it will request UN agencies to do so. UNHCR could rapidly provide 10,000 non-food item kits. UNHCR's revised Pakistan IDP crisis planning (and funding provided by PRM through the FY09 Supplemental) anticipates both up to 200,000 additional IDPs from Waziristan and substantial additional provision of non-food item kits.

¶11. (SBU) The World Food Program (WFP) has a 15 percent contingency reserve in the current food pipeline (40,045 MT) of basic commodities (cereals, pulses and oil) that could be available for Waziristan displacement. USAID's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance has also awarded WFP USD 1.5 million to open/improve two logistical hubs close to the

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anticipated areas of displacement (as well as to expand a current hub in Pir Pai). WFP will open a 5,000 MT-capacity hub in Bakkar and is training staff and has equipment for a Peshawar hub pending government approval to open. Recent USAID/OFDA donations have also allowed partners to procure and warehouse non-food items that could be directed in the event of a large scale displacement. These include hygiene kits (UNICEF), NFI kits (IOM) and basic medicines (WHO). For future contingencies related to IDPs from Waziristan, USAID is proposing to place in reserve USD 30 million of the USD 125 million in the FY09 Supplemental. The funds could supplement Migration and Refugee Assistance and International Disaster Assistance funding in supporting relief operations and could also support return, recovery and reconstruction efforts.

¶12. (SBU) Dera Ismail Khan is under almost complete control of the Pakistan military. Most major roads have been closed to curb the flow of militants, and strict curfews are in place. Due to the ongoing military operation in South Waziristan the IDP flow continues, but due to road closures IDPs are moving via Gohman Zahn Road from Wanna, South Waziristan to Tank, thereby bypassing Baitullah Mehsud's territory. Alternatively, IDPs appear to be leaving through Zhob in Balochistan. USAID project field staff also report that some families have migrated from Mehsud tribal areas to Wazir areas inside Waziristan. A South Waziristan official reported that as of May 20, 2,871 families (36,000 individuals) had left the Mehsud area. USAID field staff are in contact with some people inside Waziristan who estimate that 80 to 90 percent of the Mehsud tribal population has already moved to other locations.

¶13. (SBU) The government has charged police with registering IDPs coming out of Waziristan. Currently the most pressing problem facing local government is tracking IDPs; only a fraction of the estimated total has arrived in Tank and Dera Ismail Khan. According to figures obtained from the District

Coordination Officer (DCO) Tank, only 14,000 individuals have registered to date. The DCO's office is searching for those who have reportedly left but have not registered. Many are leaving on foot and traversing the difficult mountainous terrain of Frontier Region (FR) Tank. USAID is providing through the DCO of Dera Ismail Khan approximately 3,000 tents, 11,000 NFI kits, and community tool kits to help the local government respond to the displacement.

¶14. (SBU) Comment: While issues surrounding the internally displaced population continue to dominate local news, unlike for Buner, information about Swat remains hard to come by. As of June 20, there will be no international humanitarian organization operating in Mingora with expatriate staff. Reports from Post contacts indicate that while a few residents are returning and services are being restored, much reconstruction is needed. One dilemma facing local authorities is that residents are needed to begin reconstruction to restore services; however, residents are hesitant to return until services and security are restored. Meanwhile, preparation for an exodus from South Waziristan is hindered by uncertainty and lack of access. End Comment.
PATTERSON